



United States Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Challis Field Office
1151 Blue Mountain Road
Challis, Idaho 83226



In Reply Refer To:
2200/3809/IDI-33145/IDI-35728 (IDI030)

Dear Reader:

Enclosed for your review is the *Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Proposed Resource Management Plan Amendment (FEIS/PRMPA) for the Thompson Creek Mine Expansion and Public Land Disposal, Custer and Bannock Counties, Idaho*. There was a 30 day public scoping period for the project pursuant to a Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS published in the *Federal Register* on August 3, 2010 (75 FR 45652). A 90 day public comment period was held for the draft EIS/draft resource management plan amendment (DEIS/DRMPA) upon publication of the EPA Notice of Availability (NOA) for the DEIS/DRMPA in the *Federal Register* on March 21, 2014 (75 FR 06113). A 30 day FEIS/PRMPA review period was initiated by publication of the EPA NOA in the *Federal Register*. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has also published a NOA for the FEIS/PRMPA in the *Federal Register*.

Copies of the FEIS are available in the BLM Challis Field Office at 1151 Blue Mountain Road, Challis, Idaho from 7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays. Copies are also available at http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/prog/nepa_register/TCM-exlx_EIS.html.

Subsequent to the 30 day review period for the FEIS/PRMPA, the responsible officials from the BLM, US Forest Service (Forest Service), and US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) will each prepare a record of decision (ROD) for the components of the project for which the officials have respective authority, and for which there are distinct objection processes (see the Executive Summary for more details).

The FEIS/PRMPA was prepared in response to a modified mining plan of operations (MMPO) and land exchange proposed by Thompson Creek Mining Company. The Thompson Creek Molybdenum Mine is 7 miles northwest of Clayton and 21 miles southwest of Challis in Custer County, Idaho. The mine has been in operation since 1981 and is authorized for approximately 3,300 acres of surface disturbance, of which approximately 2,300 acres are on private land, approximately 750 acres are on BLM-administered land, and approximately 250 acres are on National Forest System land. The current surface disturbance at the mine is approximately 2,800 acres. The MMPO would allow an approximate 10 year extension of the mine life with the necessary expansion of the waste rock and tailings storage facilities, re-alignment of a power line, and revised long-term water management. These activities would require additional authorized surface disturbance on approximately 200 acres of BLM-administered land, 185 acres of National Forest System land, and 110 acres of private land.

The land exchange proposal is an offer to exchange approximately 900 acres of private lands owned by Thompson Creek Mining Company in Custer and Bannock counties for approximately 5,100 acres of

selected, BLM-administered land involving the mine in Custer County. The offered lands are the Broken Wing Ranch (813 acres) in Custer County and the Garden Creek property (80 acres) in Bannock County. The current Challis RMP does not identify the selected land as available for disposal. Therefore, in addition to evaluating the land exchange proposal, the FEIS also evaluates amending the RMP to identify the selected land as suitable for disposal pursuant to the Federal Land Policy Management Act of 1976, as amended.

The FEIS presents a set of three MMPO alternatives, and an independent set of five land disposal alternatives. That is, the MMPO alternatives would not be affected by any of the land disposal alternatives; the mine would not operate differently depending on Federal or private ownership of the selected land. The alternatives were developed and analyzed based on issues/concerns identified during the internal and public scoping process. The FEIS will be the basis for decisions by the BLM, Forest Service, and USACE. For the MMPO alternatives, each agency will issue a decision for the portion of the mining operations under the agencies' respective authorities. The major components of the operations subject to these authorities are the following:

- BLM – storage of waste rock south of the open pit and long-term water management;
- Forest Service – storage of waste rock north of the open pit, expansion of the tailings storage facility, re-alignment of a section of power line; and
- USACE – 404 permit for waters of the US that would be filled as part of mining operations.

The BLM will also issue a decision for the land disposal alternatives (exchange, sale, no action). If a land disposal action alternative is selected, the BLM will amend the Challis RMP to allow the land disposal to occur. We appreciate your interest in the project. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Ken Gardner, project manager, at the BLM Challis Field Office, telephone: (208) 879-6210; email: ksgardner@blm.gov.

Sincerely,

/s/ Todd Kuck
Todd Kuck
Field Manager